

# News from Ed Markey

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## CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION OBJECTS TO GOVERNOR'S REQUEST TO REDUCE MEDICAID BENEFITS

*State waiver would decrease aid to the elderly and disabled*

**WASHINGTON, DC** - Representative Edward Markey (D-MA) and the entire Massachusetts Congressional delegation have delivered a letter to Thomas A. Scully, Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), opposing the Commonwealth's application for a Medicaid waiver that would allow a more severe review of assets when determining Medicaid benefits.

"This ill-considered waiver would permit the state to look back up to ten years for assets that can be counted against an applicant's eligibility for Medicaid," said Rep. Markey. "This program serves many of the poorest and most vulnerable people of our state. This change would hurt thousands of them. It is inherently unfair for the welfare of poor and elderly people in the Commonwealth to hinge on what may have been in their bank accounts ten years ago."

In testimony on the proposed change, Deborah Banda of the AARP of Massachusetts stated; "The proposal is so broad that if implemented, vulnerable, frail elders residing in nursing facilities will be harmed as well as their spouses in the community."

MassHealth's Medicaid costs are shared equally by the Federal government and the Commonwealth. Seven out of ten patients in nursing homes are covered by MassHealth benefits, of whom 85% are elderly women over 65 years of age. Eligibility for nursing home benefits under MassHealth is based on an examination of a person's assets. The Commonwealth is applying for a waiver that will allow a more intrusive examination of assets and a redefinition of wealth. The Massachusetts Proposal for Demonstration Affecting Assets of Institutionalized Individuals would expand the traditional examination of assets from 3 to 5 years for real estate and double the look-back from 5 to 10 years for annuities and irrevocable trusts. According to Beth Waldman, MassHealth Medicaid Director, the changes will reduce benefits paid by Massachusetts by \$12 million, with an equal reduction of Federal benefits.

Rep. Markey concluded, "This attempted waiver would alter the state administration of Medicaid in a way that will place the well-being of our elderly and disabled residents in jeopardy. A reduction in federally-subsidized Medicaid services will result in a reduction of state health care spending, a reduction of health services delivered and a loss of health related jobs. In this soft economy, we can hardly afford to lose jobs in the health care sector, let alone leave thousands who can't afford health care without this lifeline."

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